

Gettysburg / Resources

Resource # 8. Reactions to the Gettysburg Address (for Learning Activity #3)

1. From the Press:

(From Louis A. Warren, *Lincoln's Gettysburg Declaration*)

From the Chicago Tribune:

"The dedicatory remarks by President Lincoln will live among the annals of the war."

From the Chicago Times:

"The cheek of every American must tingle with shame as he reads the silly flat and dishwattery [sic] remarks of the man who has to be pointed out as the President of the United States. ... Is Mr. Lincoln less refined than a savage? ... It was a perversion of history so flagrant that the most extended charity cannot view it as otherwise than willful."

From the Springfield (MA) Republican:

"His little speech is a perfect gem, deep in feeling, compact in thought and expression, and tasteful and elegant in every word and comma."

From the London Times:

"The ceremony was rendered ludicrous by some of the sallies of that poor President Lincoln. Anything more dull and commonplace it would not be easy to produce."

From the Providence Daily Journal:

"We know not where to look for a more admirable speech than the brief one which the President made.... It is often said that the hardest thing in the world is to make a five minute speech. But could the most elaborate and splendid oration be more beautiful, more touching, more inspiring than those few words of the President?"

Gettysburg / Resources

Resource # 8. Reactions to the Gettysburg Address

(for Learning Activity #3, cont'd)

From the Harrisburg Patriot and Union:

"The President succeeded on this occasion because he acted without sense and without constraint in a panorama that was gotten up more for the benefit of his party than for the glory of the nation and honor of the dead ... we pass over the silly remarks of the President: for the credit of the nation we are willing that the veil of oblivion shall be dropped over them and that they shall no more be repeated or thought of."

2. From Civilians:

The following are real examples of responses of citizens of Gettysburg to Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Please note that some of these responses were recorded immediately, while others were written down decades later.

(From Jared Peatman, "Profound Silence, Followed by Hearty Applause: Gettysburg Responds to Lincoln's Address," unpublished manuscript)

"There was one disappointing feature about it – its marked brevity. The speaker had, as we thought, but barely commenced when he stopped. That clear, ringing voice ceased before we were ready for it. There was a pause between the closing of the address and the applause because the people expected more; but when it was apparent that the address was really concluded, the applause was most hearty. . ."

"To my great surprise, after a few sentences, he completed his remarks."

"His modest appearance and dignified manners, to say nothing of the noble speeches he made here, has endeared him to the hearts of the people and added thousands of friends to him on that day."

Gettysburg / Resources

Resource # 8. Reactions to the Gettysburg Address

(for Learning Activity #3, cont'd)

"It was as fine as speech as I ever heard."

"The recollections of men now living in Gettysburg are at variance. Some remember the liberal applause that the Sentinel's (a local newspaper) report indicates. Others with equal certainty deny that there was any outward expression of approval."

"I was thrilled each time and at Gettysburg possibly more by his presence than by anything he said."

"He stood in the gravity of his mien and manner as a seer with a message, as a prophet with a vision."

"The deep feeling of the speaker, combined with masterful self control and firmly set purpose, made a profound impression."

"On coming away I said to a classmate, 'Well, Mr. Lincoln's speech was simple, appropriate, and right to the point, but I don't think there was anything remarkable about it.' "

"I at once asked my fellow student, who was from the South, what he thought of it? 'Mighty good, for Old Abe,' he replied."¹

¹ Barton, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 176.